

As a former member on the House Foreign Affairs committee, I am keenly aware of the importance of our International Affairs budget. The critical programs associated with diplomacy and development foster economic and political stability and strengthen our national security.

The entire International Affairs Budget is a mere 1.7% of the total FY2012 Budget. Within the International Affairs budget, U.S. foreign assistance programs account for about one percent of the total U.S. budget. Chronic under-funding of our development and diplomatic agencies has been one problem plaguing our foreign assistance system. Furthermore, budgetary shortfalls for the State Department and USAID have resulted in significant staff cuts, hiring freezes, and consolidation.

Defense Secretary Gates has stated, "having robust civilian capabilities available could make it less likely that military force will have to be used in the first place, as local problems might be dealt with before they become crises." Several other military leaders have also recognized the importance that diplomatic, development, and humanitarian tools have to ensuring our national security. International affairs programs also create jobs at home by fostering sound economic policies in developing countries and creating new markets for American goods and services. Our international affairs budget also reflects America's values and our commitment to fight poverty, disease, despair, and insecurity.

Even during tough economic times at home, we need to remember the importance of using our resources to support policies that improve the lives of millions and promote our national security. But it is our responsibility to use these resources wisely in order to effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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